



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 28, 2018

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**MAYOR EMANUEL, ANDREA AND JAMES GORDON AND THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT  
ANNOUNCE PLANS TO EXPAND CITYWIDE THEATER AND CULTURAL PROGRAMMING**

*Generous donation from James and Andrea Gordon will support theater in communities across  
Chicago with Theater on the Lake as the hub*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Park District Superintendent and CEO Michael P. Kelly today announced the expansion of citywide theater and cultural programs and events across the city, with Theater on the Lake as the hub. A generous multi-year donation from James and Andrea Gordon will support the expansion of theater in every community across Chicago and improvements to many Park District performance spaces and facilities.

"Thanks to the generous donation and support from Jim and Andi Gordon, residents across the city will experience the power of Chicago's theater community," said Mayor Emanuel. "We could not wait until 2019 to kick-off The Year of Chicago Theatre, and to celebrate the talented artists that work tirelessly bring the stage to life for audiences throughout the city and downtown."

"My wife Andi and I are proud to support Mayor Emanuel and the Chicago Park District in their efforts to expand cultural programming into every Chicago neighborhood," said Jim Gordon, Founder and Managing Partner of Edgewater Growth Capital Partners. "Initiatives like Night Out in the Parks have a powerful impact on the professional careers of emerging artists and serve to transform neighborhood parks into cultural hubs of activity that offer unique experiences for individuals of all ages and make our city safer for everyone."

This generous donation will also help sustain current citywide cultural programs for future years that include the mobile outreach initiatives ArtSeed and Inferno, as well as the youth-focused leadership projects, Young Cultural Stewards and T.R.A.C.E.

Spanning over 10 years, this financial commitment will support the 2019 Year of Chicago Theatre. Mayor Emanuel, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and the League of Chicago Theatres recently announced this citywide, year-long focus on theatre. The first-of-its-kind in the U.S. will include theatre performances and special events for the public at hundreds of cultural venues, theaters, parks and neighborhood locations throughout the city. The City of Chicago and its partners will also launch a marketing campaign that leverages a new brand for Chicago theatre; provide additional financial grants to theatre projects; encourage dialog around inclusion and equity; and call on civic, philanthropic, arts and business leaders to support the theatre community.

Theater on the Lake is announced as the hub for expanded citywide theater and cultural programming as the first fall performances begin in the newly renovated, historic lakeside facility. The fall performances at Theater on the Lake will include diverse works by local and world-class artists: Theater Unspeakable, About Face Theater, Cecil Baldwin of Welcome To Night Vale, Harold Green, and Back Room Shakespeare Project.

A new series, TOTL's Curated Theater Conversations, will debut in the fall alongside the staged theater presentations and become a valuable resource for the theater community. These conversations will convene professionals, emerging artists and theater companies to discuss the history and future of collaborative ensemble-based theater making. The first conversation, curated by Dr. Coya Paz, will focus on the rich history of ensemble theatre in the Chicago community. Additional conversational dates, will invite the Chicago community to connect with creative thinkers to engage in active discussion about gender, sexuality, death, crime and professional development.

The Chicago Park District currently hosts more than 50 theater productions across the city as part of the Mayor Emanuel's Night Out in the Parks, a series of cultural events and activities at parks across the city. Night Out in the Parks hosts more than 1,200 world-class events with the involvement of over 1,700 Chicago-based artists across the city's 77 community areas. Nearly all events are free of charge.

"We are excited to continue to bolster access to cultural experiences for individuals of all ages and interests citywide and expand resources to Chicago's outstanding theater community in 2019," said Chicago Park District CEO & Superintendent, Michael P. Kelly. "James and Andi Gordon's donation will go a long way in helping to foster future generations of artists and performers."

The Chicago Park District was recently awarded the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Innovation in Social Equity Award for our ongoing efforts to promote access to culture, art and recreation for everyone, through initiatives like Night Out in the Parks, at our local parks.

For more information about Theater on Lake, please visit [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/theater-lake](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/theater-lake).

### **About Theater on the Lake**

Constructed in 1920, the Theater on the Lake building was originally a recuperation ward for babies suffering from tuberculosis and other diseases. During World War II, the structure was then used as a USO Center. After the war, the Chicago Park District used the lakefront venue for then-popular barn dances. In 1952, it was converted into the Theater on the Lake performance venue and showcased productions staged by the Chicago Park District's many community theater organizations. In 1996, the programming evolved into its current format, and the Chicago Park District began inviting professional theater companies to remount their best works.

The Joseph Jefferson Awards Committee honored Theater on the Lake with the 2011-12 Special Award for developing new audiences of non-equity theaters and artists, and in celebration of 60 years dedicated to expanding theater opportunities throughout the Chicago community.

In 2017, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Park District reopened the Theater on the Lake (TOTL) building as a year-round production and event space. The historic building has been transformed from a summer programming site to a year-round performance and special events venue. TOTL is a 19,000 square foot lakefront venue that now includes a performance area for theater and music, a restaurant, two private event spaces and an outdoor patio.

**About the Chicago Park District**

The Chicago Park District is a Gold Medal Award winner, recognized for excellence in park and recreation management across the nation. For more information about the Chicago Park District's more than 8,800 acres of parkland, more than 600 parks, 26 miles of lakefront, 12 museums, two world-class conservatories, 16 historic lagoons, nearly 50 nature areas, thousands of special events, sports and entertaining programs, please visit [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) or contact the Chicago Park District at 312/742.PLAY or 312/747.2001 (TTY). Want to share your talent? Volunteer in the parks by calling, 312/742.PLAY.